

**Amendments To The Specification**

-On page 1 below the heading "Technical Field", please delete the present sentence and replace with the following:

The present disclosure relates to case hardening and, more particularly, to case hardening of stainless steel.

-On page 2 below the heading "Disclosure of Invention", please amend the paragraph as follows:

The object of the ~~invention~~ disclosure is to provide a new and improved method for case-hardening stainless steel. ~~The object of the invention is obtained by a process according to the preamble of claim 1, wherein the~~ A top layer includes metal which is catalytic to the decomposition of the gas carrying the carbon or/and nitrogen atoms and which is one or more of the metals Ni, Ru, Co or Pd. The metal layer protects the stainless steel surface from oxidation and acts as a catalytic surface for the decomposition of the gas. As a result, the process temperature can be kept below the temperature at which carbides and/or nitrides are formed, and the process can be finished within a reasonable period of time. After the thermo-chemical treatment, the catalytic metal layer can be removed to expose and repassivate the hardened stainless steel surface.